

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 PM-04 L-03 NSC-05 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02

CU-02 EB-07 SAJ-01 OPR-02 SIL-01 LAB-04 HEW-04 SCCT-01

/070 W

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9849

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 11046

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SEDU, PINT, FR

SUBJECT: STUDENT UNREST IN FRANCE -- II

REF: PARIS 10734

SUMMARY. EXCEPT FOR DEMONSTRATIONS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TOULOUSE ON THE MORNING OF APRIL 13, TUESDAY PASSED IN RELATIVE CALM IN THE MAJOR UNIVERSITY CITIES OF FRANCE. STATE SECRETARY FOR UNIVERSITIES SAUNIER-SEITE ISSUED A STATEMENT IN WHICH GOF APPEARS TO BE WITHDRAWING SOMEWHAT FROM THE FIRM STAND IT WAS TAKING ON CARRYING OUT THE REFORM OF THE SECOND CYCLE OF STUDIES. REACTIONS TO HER REMARKS RANGED FROM ACCUSATIONS OF
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ATTEMPTING TO DIVIDE THE STUDENTS BY WOOING THE MODER-

ATES, TO GENERAL APPROVAL ON THE PART OF ANDRE HENRY, GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION FOR EDUCATION (FEN). IN THE MEANTIME, LARGE ELEMENTS OF THE FRENCH STUDENT BODY ARE PREPARING FOR THE GENERAL STRIKE AND DEMONSTRATIONS THEY HAD CALLED FOR APRIL 15 IN PARIS AND THE PROVINCES. END SUMMARY.

1. ALICE SAUNIER-SEITE DECLARED ON APRIL 13, IN REFERRING TO REFORM OF THE SECOND CYCLE, THAT THE IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTION FOR CARRYING OUT THE REFORM WOULD BE MODIFIED AFTER CONSULTATION WITH STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS AND TEACHERS UNIONS. SHE WAS IMMEDIATELY ACCUSED BY SOME JOURNALISTS, POLITICAL SPOKESMEN AND STUDENT TEACHER UNION GROUPS OF EITHER BACKING DOWN ON REFORM WHEN SHE SHOULD BE FIRM OR NOT GOING FAR ENOUGH IN DISPOSING OF THE REFORM. GOF LATER "CLARIFIED" HER STATEMENT BY SAYING THAT THERE WOULD BE NO QUESTION OF RENOUNCING THE REFORM.

2. OF SPECIAL INTEREST IS FACT THAT SAUNIER-SEITE'S STATEMENT WAS ISSUED AFTER A TWO-HOUR MEETING WITH FEN SECRETARY GENERAL ANDRE HENRY, WHO IS MODERATE LABOR LEADER SEEKING TO NEUTRALIZE COMMUNIST-LED SNE-SUM AND INES, BOTH FEN AFFILIATES. ACCORDINGLY FEN CAN CLAIM THE CREDIT FOR CONVINCING GOF OF NEED TO SHOW SOME FLEXIBILITY.

3. REACTIONS TO SAUNIERSEITE'S REMARKS WERE WIDERANGING. THE PROVISIONAL NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR STRIKING STUDENTS, FORMED ON APRIL 10 AT AMIENS, ISSUED A STATEMENT ACCUSING THE STATE SECRETARY'S REMARKS OF BEING "THOSE OF A GOVERNMENT IN DISTRESS." ON THE OTHER HAND, THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION FOR EDUCATION (FEN), ANDRE HENRY, CONFIRMED IN A STATEMENT HIS SATISFACTION WITH HER NEW POSITION. IN ADDITION, HE BELIEVES THAT HER REMARKS WILL HELP CALM THE SITUATION. BOTH FACTIONS OF UNEF, HOWEVER, CALLED HER STATEMENT A "GROSS POLITICAL CALCULATION" AND RESTATED THEIR INTENTION OF DOING EVERYTHING IN THEIR POWER TO GO THROUGH WITH THE PLANNED STRIKES ON THURSDAY, APRIL 15.

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4. TROUBLES IN TOULOUSE: VIOLENCE OCCURRED IN TOULOUSE ON APRIL 13, WHERE AN ESTIMATED 2000 ROCK-THROWING STUDENTS CLASHED WITH POLICE IN THE CENTER OF TOWN, RESULTING IN TWO WOUNDED POLICEMEN AND 26 ARRESTS AMONG THE DEMONSTRATORS. THROUGHOUT FRANCE THE MAJOR UNIVERSITIES ARE ON STRIKE, INCLUDING THOSE OF CLERMONT-FERRAND, MONTPELLIER, BESANCON, DIJON, LYON, BORDEAUX,

RENNES AND PARIS.

5. THE SOCIALIST PARTY IS WALKING A FINE LINE IN ALL
THESE EVENTS. A PARTY SPOKESMAN DECLARED ON APRIL 13
THAT "THE GOVERNMENT WAS HOPING FOR AN EXPLOSION IN THE
UNIVERSITIES, BUT WE ARE ASKING STUDENTS NOT TO FALL
INTO THESE PROVOCATIONS." PARTY SECRETARY MICHEL
ROCARD WILL SPEAK TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS AT THE PARIS
UNIVERSITY OF TOLBIAC ON APRIL 14; FIRST SECRETARY
FRANCOIS MITTERRAND INTENDS TO SPEAK AT THE UNIVERSITY

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OF PARIS (JUSSIEU CAMPUS) SOMETIME DURING THE FIRST DAYS OF MAY. GOF IS CAREFULLY BUT SERENELY WATCHING THE SITUATION.

6. COMMENT: GOF MAY CONFRONT ON APRIL 15 ONE OF THE MORE TOUCHY SITUATIONS SINCE THE ELECTION OF GISCARD IN MAY 1974. IN A FRONT-PAGE FIGARO EDITORIAL, POLITICAL SCIENTIST RAYMOND ARON DECLARED THAT NOW IS THE TIME FOR GISCARD REALLY TO SHOW HIS WORTH, TO SHOW THAT HE IS A "MUSCLED REFORMER." IN FACT, MANY OBSERVERS ARE HARD PUT TO UNDERSTAND EXACTLY WHAT THE GRIEVANCES OF THE STUDENTS ARE, AND THEREIN LIES THE REASON FOR WHICH THE CONFIDENTIAL

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GENERAL PUBLIC IS NOT SYMPATHETIC WITH THE STUDENT MOVEMENT. IN ESSENCE, THE REFORM IS ATTEMPTING TO BRING THE UNIVERSITIES CLOSER TO THE BUSINESS WORLD BY PROVIDING THAT EACH INSTITUTION MAY ESTABLISH ITS STUDY-PROGRAMS IN CONSULTATIONS WITH BUSINESS FIRMS SO THAT DIPLOMAS WILL IN FACT BE CERTIFICATES OF MARKETABLE SKILLS. THE STUDENTS CONTEND THAT THE UNIVERSITIES ARE SELLING OUT TO CORPORATE INTERESTS, AND THAT THEY WILL IN EFFECT LOSE THEIR LIBERAL ARTS ATMOSPHERE. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE CURRICULA THAT THE STUDENTS WILL FOLLOW WILL STILL BE LARGELY OF THEIR OWN CHOICE.

7. IT SEEMS THAT THIS AGITATION IS THE HANDIWORK OF THE FAR LEFT STUDENT-TEACHERS WHO SEE IN THIS ISSUE AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A REAPPEARANCE ON THE PUBLIC SCENE. WHILE THE GOF IS THEIR MAIN TARGET, SOME OF THEIR ATTACKS ARE AIMED AT THE COMMUNIST STUDENTS WHO HAVE MANAGED TO GET ELECTED IN ALL STUDENT BODIES THAT PARTICIPATE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF UNIVERSITIES.

8. AS IS USUALLY THE CASE, THE AGITATORS REPRESENT ONLY A MINORITY OF THE STUDENT BODY IN THE UNIVERSITIES--THE "LUMPEN STUDENTS" WHOSE ONLY RAISON D'ETRE IS TO CHALLENGE THE ESTABLISHMENT. THE SILENT MAJORITY IN THE STUDENT BODY ITSELF HAS ALREADY BEGUN REACTING AND THE POLICE ARE AT PAINS TO KEEP DEMONSTRATIONS FROM BECOMING SCENES OF CONFLICT BETWEEN THE MODERATES AND THE FAR LEFT. SINCE IT IS IN THE INTERESTS OF FRENCH LEFT POLITICAL PARTIES THAT CLASHES NOT OCCUR, WE ANTICIPATE THAT THE APRIL 15 DEMONSTRATIONS WILL UNFOLD IN RELATIVE CALM UNLESS OF COURSE, AS HAD BEEN RUMORED, GOF ITSELF PROVIDES AGENTS PROVOCATEURS FOR THE EXPRESS PURPOSE OF DISCREDITING THE LEFT OR THE FAR LEFT CHOOSES TO ESCALATE THE DEMONSTRATIONS INTO VIOLENCE.

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